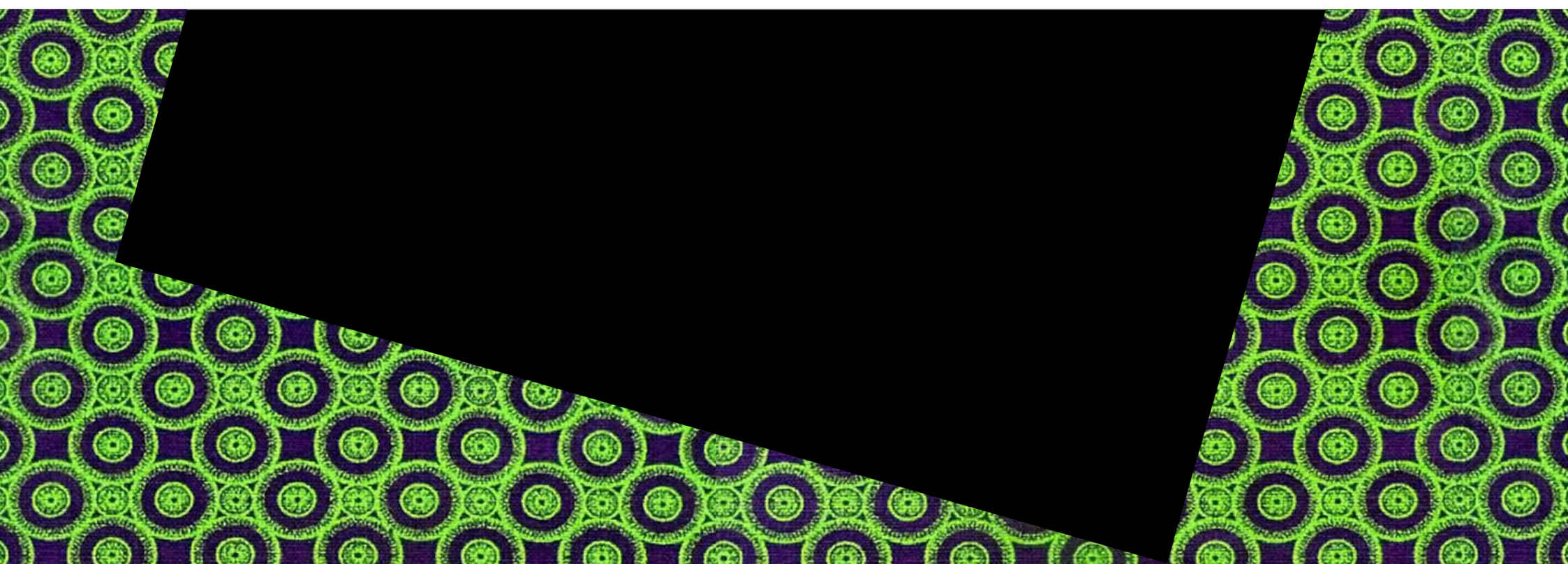


ART ON OUR MIND



Sophie Peters

Creative Dialogue | 5 Nov 2021 | 12-13h

GSB Conference Centre, University of Cape Town & online:

www.afemsconference.wixsite.com/afems/afems-2021

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ART ON OUR MIND

Art on our Mind Creative Dialogue
Sophie Peters
with Sharlene Khan and Nono Motlhoki
12 October 2021
Cape Town
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[0:13]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Hi, everyone, and welcome to the Art on our Mind talk with Sophie Peters. Very happy to be here today with Sophie and Nono Motlhoki – who is our Art on our Mind research team member and Nono, say hi Nono.

[0:34]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Hello. [a gentle giggle]

[0:37]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And a big thank you to Nono, who has done a lot of work towards today's interview with Sophie. You know, there's a lot of research that actually goes into one of these talks and so big thank you to Nono for that. It's wonderful to finally be able to do this Art on our Mind talk with Sophie. We were supposed to do this dialogue last year, but there was this little issue of a global pandemic that happened. And so, we're really happy to have this occasion to finally have this talk with Sophie, which is also being held on the occasion of the Afems (African Feminisms Conference) 2021 conference, which is being held at the University of Cape Town. To give a brief history of the Art on Our Mind talks: It is a research project that is done by myself – Sharlene Khan. I'm a visual artist and scholar, and we started this research project in 2019, and it

is based on a book by the scholar, by the feminist scholar bell hooks, her book 'Art on my Mind'. And it is a collection of essays in which she discusses the importance of visuality in her own community. We have taken that as the basis for tackling the visuality within our own community and the importance within our own community. Art on our Mind is dedicated to looking at the paucity of discourse around amazing women, visual artists and creatives who produce the most amazing visual productions within South Africa. And what we are hoping is to generate primary research through dialogue with artists, and we are hoping that discourse catches up with the amazingness of what they do. And so today, Sophie Peters. We are here in Cape Town with Sophie Peters, who has opened up her studio to us. Sophie currently resides in Mannenberg [a township in Cape Town] and she's working out here out of a studio here in Kensington [a suburb in Cape Town] And Sophie and I met in, somewhere in the early 2000s on a most unfortunate – for me – monument making workshop that was being hosted with regards to establishing a women's memorial at the site. What was it? The...

[03:37]

Ms Sophie Peters: The Union Buildings.

[03:38]

Dr Sharlene Khan: The Union Buildings, yes. And they were doing this, this workshop. And if anybody knows me, I am not a sculptor. I only think in 2D and then I moved to the back. I'm always surprised that there's other sides to something. And so, it was just very unfortunate and I was in a lot of trauma. And Sophie was my saving grace in a lot of ways. And if you know Sophie, she's healing and wonderfulness and grace embodied. And so, since that very unfortunate incident that was that workshop, I, we've managed to keep in touch over all that time. And I've been very impacted by the amazingness that is your research work and your artistic work and just been following your career since then and looking for an opportunity to deeply engage with your work. And so, I'm going to start you off with some of the basic questions that we ask in Art on our Mind. Where were you born?

[04:47]

Ms Sophie Peters: I was born in Jo'burg. A place, the community was called Kliptown, and now the name is changed to Eldorado Park. So, I've been living there since until the age of 13. From there, I moved with the gospel in other places. And when I grew up as

far as 16, I started moving up to Cape Town. But I was drawing when I was a child. Doing drawings of buildings and people and my, my sister, it was a best pencil work that I've ever done and I thought I was tip-top. But it wasn't tip-top, but it was good in my eyes. It was a perfect drawing. But someone else stole it and I never seen it since that time. And I came up to Cape Town and I felt that I wanted to know, where is the art schools in Cape Town? Because they said it's flooded with artists. I made my way to Woodstock [suburb in Cape Town] and they told me there's an old church. They called it Community Arts Project.¹ And I went there and people were standing in the line. Young people and they didn't want artists that's coming to learn from the ground. They needed artists that got the art in their hands. So, I was in because I knew I got it. And when they gave me the paper and they locked me up in a room and with charcoal and I said, "I can't draw with the charcoal, I use a pencil." They said, "No, this is not going to work for us. Here's the charcoal, here's the paper and there's a sculpture. Draw the sculpture," and they lock the door and it went out. Because why are they so aggressive with what they said? Because the line was too long. So, I went in the room I, I didn't know if I could warm up. I was a bietjie shaky because I didn't know what I'm going to get this thing right. But suddenly in my inner human person, something warmed up. I don't know what, but I caught the black and the whites altogether. And when I was finished, I knocked by the door and they opened, they look, they say, "I think you made it." They said I must follow. Then we get to the office. Amazing, they gave me forms, and I knew that I was in for three years. And I signed the forms and they said, "We want to see you Monday," and I was there.

[07:35]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, what year were you born? If I'm allowed to ask?

[07:40]

Ms Sophie Peters: 196– Ya.

[07:40]

Dr Sharlene Khan: 1968?

¹ "The Community Arts Project (CAP) was established in [Cape Town](#) in 1977 as a response to the [1976 Youth Uprising](#), as well as to the need for accommodation and facilities to be used by all artists, many of whom lived in marginalised communities or in areas where facilities were minimal if any." - <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/community-arts-project-cap>

[07:43]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ya, but what happened, what happened there, school papers, jislik... were lost. Nobody knew where it was. To go to school, they have to like plea and pay the principal to, to get – In the time of apartheid, it was very bad. And so, they got me in. But my niece and me were the same age. So, I have to locate and find out, is this the right age they are. And because all papers are gone. And my mother's, and ja. They were always like drinking and so what happened I didn't even change the ID, I didn't even worry about it. So that's why I'm sitting with two ages.

[08:32]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: What's the two ages?

[08:33]

Ms Sophie Peters: Alright. 1960 was on the ID. Right. And the other one now is 1968. 1968 is the right one, you see? Ja.

[08:44]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Which school did you go to when you ...

[08:46]

Ms Sophie Peters: Kliptown High. There was no, nothing. Uh-uh.

[08:51]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, what kind, when you were little, what kind of creativity or art did you come to? How did you find your creative spirit when you were small?

[09:02]

Ms Sophie Peters: In school?

[09:03]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Ya.

[09:03]

Ms Sophie Peters: Because they gave – I studied science from childhood. Drawing the cat, the teacher's cats and meals and everything that was in there [laughing] like

houses, whatever. But that was like, jislik it was so good for my eye. Even cabbages, you know, spinach, you have to draw it and I draw it so fine and so good until I feel just like this is standing out. Right. Now to fill it in with colour, I always use like watercolour and I just make it, it's like you can smell it. That's how I worked. But I was never in an art school. That was another thing. So, I can say I was born with it, but it needed technically to come strong. That's why when I grew up, I have to go to art school. Wood carving, I wasn't taught because I started with a razor blade on a tomato, tomato box. I wrote words: *You can't rub love in. You can't rub love off. You can't borrow love. You can't sell love. You can't buy love.* I just wrote it and I cut it out with a razor blade, and I took the tomato box, I coloured in with crayon pencil and make a rose and nice leaves, whatever. And I sold it for R10.00. And that R10.00 bought me and my mother and them, the other R10.00 potatoes and tomatoes. I supported my mother when I was the age of 13/10, around there.

[10:52]

Dr Sharlene Khan: You know, in a lot of your works, you reference your mother, you know. Whether it is in this work here [Cry From The Heart, 1995] where it is, we see your mother on the bed, a hospital bed. Deals with the death of your mother and the circumstances around that. Can you, can you tell us a bit about your mum and what are the circumstances that led to, to you referencing and because it's quite a life event that that impacted you?

[11:28]

Ms Sophie Peters: Okay. You see, Kliptown was a place of jolling. Indians live there. China's, Coloured, Xhosa, Venda, and all nations used to live in Kliptown. I still think there's a variety of people living there. But if a woman wants something, she made a way to take it. And she couldn't get my father because my father is an Indian man, you know. They got that smart, soft hair and he's strong and he works. And that happened. From my mother. They drank together in the shebeen where Linda was staying. So, Linda used to sell Maizer – it's homemade beer. So, what she said that day, this, it's like this baby Klim tin, the small one. They used to sell that for 5c, right. It's way back. 5c. And she said, 'But I'm giving you this. This is yours, but don't, don't go to the tin and take for yourself. But I felt something in me there was something wrong.'

[12:56]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And Linda was your mum's friend?

[12:58]

Ms Sophie Peters: My mom's best friend. I, I try to listen what's inside, but it, it kick me because I can't say what it really is, but it was danger.

[13:12]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And how old where you?

[13:13]

Ms Sophie Peters: I was like six years old. Ja. And what happened there, my mom's friend went away. So, she went to go fetch some money, or was it old age pen – I don't know. But my mom drank that beer. And when she was finished... Remember, it's this time of the day, until night-time, like 8/7pm, and she start coughing. So, what happened, what was in that beer, it was like, uh, they, they call it, uh, apricot acid. You understand? So that was so strong it burned the inside because the doctor said it was kaffir* poison, but it was like apricot acid. How she managed to do what? I don't know. But now she was after my father. So, when my mother suffered, my father's stick by the, by the shebeen. So, what she caught my father with, I still don't know. So, in the area there was a lot of like witchcraft. A lot, a lot. They can just witchcraft you, you can pick up papers or eat from the toilet or something like that, you know. Ugh, it's, it's not good. But anyway, it's past tense.

[14:45]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, what happened to your mum?

[14:46]

Ms Sophie Peters: Right. After that, she went to the hospital because she cough and cough and cough and we didn't know what was happening because she couldn't talk anymore. At hospital, she lay there the first night, the second night, and when I went to go visit all the time. The results when I became of the age of 12, merely by 12/13, the age of 12, I came by the hospital and she said I must tell her best friend 'Good bye'. So now I knew something happened between her and my mother. And the second day

when I went there, I try to look for my mother in the, in the hospital bed, she wasn't there. And that kicked me. It kicked me on that same moment. And I rushed in, try to talk to the nurses who said, 'No, go to talk to the doctor.' When they send me to the doctor I knew, she was dead. Then I started crying. I couldn't just talk to the doctor, I say 'Hulle gaan my nou sê my ma dood. Hulle gaan dood ge maak. Julle moet my explain way het gebeur.' [They are going to tell me my mother is dead. They are going to say she is dead. You must explain to me what happened.] I didn't want to get out the hospital without results. They told me she had like home-beer and in the home-beer there was acid.

[16:20]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, you were 13 years old when she passed away?

[16:23]

Ms Sophie Peters: Hmm?

[16:24]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And you were 13 years old?

[16:25]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja.

[16:26]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And what was life like, life like after that?

[16:31]

Ms Sophie Peters: Whew... What I got, the ideas that I was born with, the art, I had to survive through that. I have to sell oranges to buy myself a school shirt, books, shoes. Weekend, I used to make a lot of money and to buy myself the best that I could. And that is the way I survived. But my father couldn't give me a money, money for shirt, for a shirt or a shoe or socks. He was always busy or he wasn't at home and he was just gone to come back at night in he's drunk. There's always broken promises, 'Nah, I will. I will. Tomorrow, tomorrow. Aih, don't worry. Next week. I haven't got money.' You understand? So, I didn't want to go to school with torn shoes, open shoes because the first shoes I had to tie down it with wire. And it's winter, it's June month and it's ice cold

between the grass to get to Shawela, by the school. And when I get to school, the hands are so dry of the cold and so hard you late. And now you have to do like this.² [brings her fingers together above her palm] You must hit you with a ruler because you late. Jislik, you feel like dying because the pain is already there of the cold and you bashing me. In fact, you can kill someone because the pain is too, it's too heavy. But it's, it's, it's deeper than that. So, yeah. And I studied on my own way. My sister wasn't supportive. Nobody. Had to push myself.

[18:21]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Sounds like a very difficult and painful way to grow up, Sophie.

[18:25]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And is this you and your mum here? [pointing towards a photograph]

[18:27]

Ms Sophie Peters: Yeah. Yeah, this is me.

[18:30]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And what age are you here?

[18:31]

Ms Sophie Peters: I think I was 6, around there. 6 or 7, I think so.

[18:38]

Dr Sharlene Khan: This is one of those works... I mean, what is, what is this this work called?

[18:44]

Ms Sophie Peters: This is the The Times of my Past (1999). Thank you. Yes. Everything, that's what I told you is in here. But this is in detail. You know, when I was a child, I used to fight. Come back to my old lady and tell her, 'Jislik, I just bash someone else, but I'm feeling bad, I'm feeling hurt.' And she said, 'It's okay, but you got to go back

² A common form of corporal punishment in schoolkids, where they smack your fingers.

and I'm going to fight for you. I'm not going to fight someone else for your punch.' This is your street life.

[19:28]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: So, this is lino [linocut]? This is lino work?

[19:30]

Ms Sophie Peters: Yes, this is lino work.

[19:31]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Because a lot of people are under the impression that you were not formally trained. But as you mentioned, you went to CAP (Community Arts Project)

[19:36]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja, I went to CAP. There's where I started with lino. I didn't even know how to work with lino.

[19:42]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: And then you later went on to teach at CAP as well. What was that experience like?

[19:47]

Ms Sophie Peters: The experience, jislik, it was very good because after the three years, uh, '85, '86, '87. After '87, I started, they started, gave us training to go out and teach like Langa, Gugulethu, [townships in Cape Town] and all these kind of centres. But the art school, they, Saturdays we used to teach children that comes from Gugulethu and Langa and other places. And that was the only element that we were taught strongly to work with.

[20:34]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: And it's – Sorry.

[20:36]

Ms Sophie Peters: My painting came afterwards. That is why they pushed us for first – linocut. Yeah. Then afterwards, the colour linocut came in.

[20:46]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: And that's what I was about to ask, that there is a – in terms of colour – a big difference between the paintings and the linos. Where the linos it's just black ink, maybe with a touch of gold, whereas the paintings have a lot more colour. And you mentioned in one interview that you are very sceptical with working with colour in lino and then, but you were more confident with working with colour in painting.

[21:09]

Ms Sophie Peters: The paintings came afterwards. When it's like they give you classes, you start with something else and next month you start with something else and you start with three colours: brown, black and white. Just three colours, not even a range. And that makes you scratch. Jislik, how am I going to get around this space, and it's just three colours that teachers – That's all! Klaar. That's it. And she goes, 'You got to work your way out with those three colours.' So, from ...

[21:45]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So that was two years. One year or two years did you study at CAP?

[21:51]

Ms Sophie Peters: Three years.

[21:52]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Three years?

[21:52]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja. It's from [198]6, [198]5. Mxm, arg. From [198]6, [198]7, uh-uh.

[22:01]

Dr Sharlene Khan: '85, '86, '87.

[22:02]

Ms Sophie Peters: That's it, ja.

[22:04]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Who else was in your class? Billy Mandindi. Vuyile ...

[22:06]

Ms Sophie Peters: Billy Mandindi is there today. Ya.

[22:07]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Vuyile Voyiya.

[22:11]

Ms Sophie Peters: Cameron Vuyisane. Right. Let me see the other guys I remember. Ja, Vuyile. Tshidi Sefako.

[22:17]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Mmhm. David Hlongwane.

[22:23]

Ms Sophie Peters: Da-Da, Ja. David Hlongwane. And the others, I don't know but the most teachers, it was Lionel Davids. Uh... Jislik, I forgot the others.

[22:42]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Was Lionel like a mentor?

[22:43]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja. Lionel did all the, the screens, screen work. But, but from lino to screen work, I mean, it teaches you to colour. But I didn't actually like to get to colour because it took me too long because I got strong in the lino. See, I didn't want to get on all those blocks and blocks and, uh-uh. I was fast. I was like, getting all images and come from, from home, like the next day. But I see near the taxi, I put it down there. No time for colour now, I'm cutting. Because the reason why, I was alone, I got no family in Cape Town. I need to support myself. I need money to eat, to drink, to get taxis somewhere. Without money I can't do, I have to sell. And that selling became. And there's a lot more lot of money that came in, and afterwards it was oversea that came in

other people from oversea and they saw my work and they made exhibitions in Mississippi and that was our first exhibition.

[23:56]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: And this is during apartheid. So how was it creating under that constant anxiety of, you know the violence? And you mentioned once that they actually did raid CAP, and I'm wondering what that experience was like. Uhm, and I think also, I remember you mentioning that because of, you know, the typical reasons [censorship] there were certain things that you couldn't say or couldn't create during that time, and you felt a lot more liberated once apartheid ended and you felt like now you were a lot more vocal and expressive about some things. So, I'm just wondering a bit about...

[24:35]

Ms Sophie Peters: You see this other thing that happened in apartheid, it was so painful and I didn't want to be involved in violence. And the paintings that we did for ANC [African National Congress – governing body in South Africa] Police was chasing us from left and tight, you know I don't want to go to jail. I just kept a – I worked, I did the flags, but anything when I hear the police I get myself out of it.

[25:08]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Wait, how, how did you, how did you get involved with doing paintings for ANC?

[25:14]

Ms Sophie Peters: They asked for flags. They, they brought some flag rags to carry. Ja, because one of the guys got a contact. I had a contact and they got us as art group and get all the gene – No, not the generator. It's, it's like something that you put on, on. It's like a camera, man. I don't know how can I say. You put the drawing...

[25:52]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Overhead projector?

[25:53]

Ms Sophie Peters: Overhead projector, yeah. Then you put it against the wall, the whole rail, then you start drawing. From there we put it on the floor, put all the papers

and we start painting. So that is where we got involved. But afterwards, with certain paintings they were chasing for certain elements, I didn't know why. And they wanted David Hlongwane, he was really involved. Now, for me and the others to be in, I kept myself out of it because I can't fight, fight the government. They got all the tribes, the guns and the flying machine. [laughing] I can fight them. I don't know. I can't do this. I'm out and I started just doing my lino on community and that is what kept me going. I kept out of cliques. Clique of friends. I did everything for myself and for the people. Whatever happens in that time, painful, I put it on lino, I don't talk a lot. That saved me in that time.

[27:04]

Ms Motlhoki Nono: And you can really see it in the work. It has a lot of pain. But you speak that you've healed a lot and you've moved on. And that music was also a big part of the healing from all of those past traumas.

[27:21]

Ms Sophie Peters: I write what I see. Where I meet some friends and I hear, maybe or pain or maybe happiness or something, I will sing about that. But the main thing is for me to heal people out of the pain and to bring them back where they supposed to be and be like, they must be general. They must be their self and they must be human and they must be happy. And that's why I work against the pain and bring all that out. And when it moves out, then you free. I got, how can I say, stories and uh, ideas, how to work it out. I can sit and talk to you. I can listen to your story. I can start drawing from your story and put it in lino and let it go.

Conversation between Dr Sharlene Khan and Ms Sophie Peters in the car, on their way to Sophie's house in Mannenberg.

[28:23]

Dr Sharlene Khan: When you tell these stories through music, what do you believe the power of that music is?

[28:32]

Ms Sophie Peters: It brings, it brings so much joy and pain because it takes out the, the pain from inside because it's so much woman that sits with the same thing that you actually don't know. My song is on radio now. It's voted, it's on 4th, right June 4th. But

what happens, Friday night they got a child, they found a child in a cooler bag. The foetus that was just, you know, the child is formed. But when the child came out, she didn't want her mother and them to know. And she took that foetus put it in the cooler bag for those 2, 3 days. Done. And she start cleaning herself up. But that pain inside, I've lost some value. I'm, I'm messed up, you see. Her future is really messed up because it will stay, it will burn at the back of the brain: I've killed a human being. Because when the preaching comes through, a song comes through, it will always hit her and it will give a freedom to be free. She have to just take it out

[30:00]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, your music helps her take it out?

[30:01]

Ms Sophie Peters: That's it. And it's a lot of people when they hear my music, like yesterday, someone say, 'My God! Will you please tell me the story of this song? Why did you write a song? Joh! It hit me.' And I couldn't, I didn't answer her because I was just in few minutes going to preach. And when I came back I read the note, the voice note. I thought, Okay, I must sit down properly and explain why is this song on air, and why did I write it? This running, it's not working. Sitting in the street the whole day and the sun is shining and you're talking nonsense, the whole day 'til sunset. Haai. And they become gangsters and stuff like that, or hit on another girl, you know. Or you get guys with name T-shirts and name shoes. And yerr, it's just money that goes for name clothes, but he is poor like a mouse. He is sitting on, on the streets. (laughter)

(31:13)

Dr Sharlene Khan: So, your work speaks a lot about, so you using the word 'yerr' and, and things are a lot deurmekaar. (laughter) And so, if you talk about that, like a society that's yerr, deurmekaar. A lot of your work is about that, right? You know, we can, another way that we can say is that the work from a very young age, your work shows violence against women, violence against children. But it is about a society that's yerr and deurmekaar. How do you, how do you continue to represent all that violence, but also not be completely overwhelmed by that?

[32:13]

Ms Sophie Peters: And on the inside, is like cooking pot. When a pot cooks, and it boils and there is no way this thing can goes up, that pot will, that lid will make a noise. Now this is how I feel when I talk about the pain of some women. [Sigh] Yoh.

Conversation moves to Sophie's house in Mannenberg.

[32:41]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Okay, I think I'm gonna start with that video that I was talking about earlier in the car, where I heard you sing, [in an interview with Pierre Tremblay]³ because the first part when you are singing, they don't show you singing, so I wasn't sure if it was you. Then the second part they do show you singing. And I was like, 'Ha! She also sings?'

[32:59]

Ms Sophie Peters: [inaudible speech]

[32:41]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: You had the same, the same doek on. In that studio.

[33:05]

Ms Sophie Peters: ASAI? [Africa South Art Initiative]

[32:41]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Yes. Yes, yes. Yes, ASAI. So, this performance [pointing towards a photograph of Sophie and another woman], where was this this?

[33:16]

Ms Sophie Peters: This was just here in Mannenberg, not far. I asked some other band to help me just to practice the song, and then the concert comes, then we can play. So, it was a Tabernacle Church just in Mannenberg. So, on that night, joh, it was a lot of women, a lot of men. But it was a lot of cry, too. Because we expressed what I was writing. That was a time when the dream of writing the pain of people like a journalist,

³ 'South African artists: what's next?' Episode 3: Sophie Peters
https://vimeo.com/20616639?embedded=true&source=video_title&owner=4349245

you, you locating some stuff that hits you. And that is what I brought up. So, *War began in the Womb* started there. And we wrote eight songs out of that. And that was the outfit that we had.

[34:15]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Beautiful outfits. Who's the, the other lady?

[34:19]

Ms Sophie Peters: She's married now. Her name is Candice Willemse. But now her surname, I don't know her surname anymore.

[34:26]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Was is a duo? Were you guys in a duo? Like a band together.

[34:29]

Ms Sophie Peters: Yeah. A duet?

[34:32]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Yes, a duet.

[34:32]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja, ja.

[34:33]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: What was it called?

[34:34]

Ms Sophie Peters: Incredible Love? That's my band name.

[34:33]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Oh, the shirts. [referring to the printed band shirts she showed us earlier] Okay.

[34:38]

Ms Sophie Peters: (laughs) Ja, God's incredible love. So, I'm trying to explain that, that God's love is so incredible. It buckles your mind because when you want to get out of something, God, yeah. It creates you and buckles your mind because you don't know what God is going to do next, you see. And that is that is the reason I call it 'Incredible Love'.

Video returns to the conversation in the car.

[34:18]

Ms Sophie Peters: To be a woman, you can be strong, you can be meek sometimes, you can be untalented, but you can use your brain. When you told me about feminism, it took me so deep when you explain me because I couldn't understand what, and I said, Stephanie must Google. (laughter) And she would Google and I said, 'Jislik! I've got everything of that.'

[35:36]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Yes.

[35:36]

Ms Sophie Peters: You know. The paintings, the music and things that I'm going through with other people that I'm helping. And ja, jislik it's too strong. That's why I put my title down: *Forgive, Forget and Move On*. [Sophie's title for her Afems presentation]

Conversation returns to Sophie's studio in Kensington.

[35:56]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: Can you also tell us a little bit about, in '93 with CAP, yet again, you guys had a mural collective? Can you tell us about what that was? Who was in it? What you guys did?

[36:09]

Ms Sophie Peters: It was just us as a group.

[36:13]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: who was in the group?

[36:15]

Ms Sophie Peters: David Hlongwane. Tshidi Sefako. Vuyo, ja it was Vuyo, then it was Cameron [as well as Matashabalala Mkhonto and Mahlomola Sekeleane]. The other that came afterwards that wasn't that strong in the art collective; then it's Hellen, I don't know what's her surname. No, not Helen Sibidi. No. Someone else it was Helen. So, we as a group, we started that collective, but we didn't go too far because it became like, someone wants to be the boss in the company and you have to go look for the work and bring it in. And so, everyone didn't want to do that. And they thought, neh, I want to do some money. I don't want to go and look for some work. So, the mural collective, was, was fine, but we didn't – Budaza, I don't know what his first, first name, but [Hamilton] Budaza was the main, main guy that worked in WC [University of Western Cape] that bring all this kind of stuff from outside in. So, we got to work for us in UWC, the murals that's on the wall until today, we have to just go to do those murals. One mural, you got to draw it this week, and you got to finish it and this in this week and you get your cash. Not longer than a week to finish. Five day, sharp! Klaar! Got to draw, paint. Whether the students are around, you got to just work around them and talk to them, 'Don't touch.' And that was nice because everyone in the, in UWC centre have his own style of work. I used to work in realistic style. That is all. I didn't like, like pattern work, and it didn't make sense for me. By me, I need to see a woman and I need to see a child and a man. Anything, a tap whatever, it must show the people this isn't ...

[38:45]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: So, you always drew from, like live. You didn't take pictures, reference pictures and then ...

[38:51]

Ms Sophie Peters: Sometimes. No, no, not too much. Sometimes I just think maybe when you say maybe, I just take that piece and I do that, I just, you know. And sometimes people on the street, take some drawings quickly. Maybe someone is standing like this, I draw fast and I take that and I'll go home and I work it out on a lino or something and it comes out, so ja. Even when they started doing this riot, breaking the shops in, whatever, I caught this one girl was running with the trolley and, the whole

grocery. But no, she was really running. So, they were breaking the shops and – but I caught that piece and I put it in one of my paintings in UWC, it's not here. And a woman, woman's half face, I put it in there because everything that is hunger of the children, the mother have to supply her children another way, but the men won't really do that. When you go to the streets, you see a woman sits with apples and oranges or something, or they selling meat or something like that. But she's working for her children to get to school, colleges or something like that. But you never see the man sitting around there and doing that. So that's why I call it 'Drinking Energy' [2006]. One of my paintings.

[40:32]

Dr Sharlene Khan: You know, you've spoken out about how women, you see them, you know, with children and the ways in which they are treated by men and even from your earliest work, whether it's around your mother or we, we see you around other women in, even as at a young age in your community, there's a lot of emphasis on women and children and the struggles that they go through. You know, here we're looking at a very early work of yours [Sorrows of Life, 1989] from '89 and we're seeing a dead woman and her child. And here again [Her Days Were Numbered, 2005], we're seeing a very metaphoric work of a woman that's been bound and screaming out in pain. There's these, these struggles emanate in so many of your works. Can you tell us about, the, you know, the, the ways in which you tackle woman and child violence in your work?

[41:34]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ok. The painting that you see, [Her Days Were Numbered, 2005] it's the part that I was talking about how they poisoned my mother. So, this is a part where the hospital, hospital give her time to come and visit us. Now at home, we have to treat her with, with maize, millie meal, maize. And I throw it in a in a funnel of glass and it goes straight to her stomach. And this hand, it talks about my, my mother's mother, my granny who say "Can you see now? I told you to stay away from all the shebeen places! Now they poisoned you. Now you see your friends are passing. They're not coming in anymore to come and greet or talk to you. Now you suffering without a visit. You suffering and they not asking you questions or bringing apples or anything. They're not caring for you." So, it's more bad than anything now. The rope, the reason why I did the rope that the poison inside was like, uh, binding the, the life out of a body, and that's why she was screaming in between scream and laugh. It's like she's

winning because she forgives the lady and she's screaming of the pain inside that she can't bear anymore. And I realize that when people are in pain, men used to abuse them. Men used to abuse them and not going to work and giving them money. They lose their work because of alcohol. And when they too much in alcohol, they, they can't focus in their work. They like shivering. So the lady that's in, in a, in a painting, she was a genuine wife for her husband, and she bear a child for him. And the other one was like 12 years old. But when he start drinking because he didn't have work, it was like frustrating. And he came one night at home and asked his wife for food, and she said, 'How can I give you food? There's no money. There's nothing to even feed the child. You can't ask that because we actually dying of hunger.' And he didn't want to hear about that and he start bashing and grabbing on her hair and hitting her and going for the child in the baby cage, in the cod. And he wants to grab the child and his wife grab the child, and it took him and it took, it took her and the child and he fling them out of the door by hair. And he hit her so hard and she landed out of the, the stoep and the child fell out of her hand. And there's a reason the child is laying on the floor full of blood, and she couldn't focus because he was unconscious. The next day, she was dead. But on the doorknob where you can see there's some blood, he cut it, his 12 years young boy's hand off because the child didn't want to leave the door. He wanted to talk to his father, but the father was so in violent he cut the hand off. But what left, it was the skin and the hand inside the door and the, the son ran away and asked for help and so other people helped him. The next day when he woke up, there's a window where you can see a small face. And the small face were looking the next day, looking for his wife and wondering what was taking place. But the liquor that he was drinking made him mad, making some demonizing, and that's why he killed his wife and he didn't know. The next day, he was so sorry for what he'd done, but he couldn't get his son again because his son ran into the community and they saved him there. After 12 years when he was in jail and he came out and he was repented and he said, 'I will never, ever use liquor anymore because liquor made me destroy my family. But now I'm looking for anyone that can sign this letter and say, I'm not going to drink anymore. By the right hand, please come and just sign.' But there was one young, one guy in the community was big already, and he couldn't sign with the right hand, he tried to sign his left and the, the guy asked 'Why, what happened with your right hand?' He said, 'Because my father cut it off. It's the story that you told, and you're my father. You been in jail for this long, and that's why I'm this way.' And they grip each other and they forgive each other and they love each other. And that was like a perfect forgiveness. And forget the pain, and they

moved on in a new kind of light. That's why the reason I called it 'Arm Without Hand'. (1989) Now the painting's name is 'Sorrows of Life'. So the other linocuts you will like etching you, you will read that its 'Arm Without Hand' because it leans with the painting. But my mother's story in that painting is nearly the same because it's in, it's in a marriage kind of thing that happened. Ja.

[48:29]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So you work between, you work between painting, you work with the linocut. You work huge murals. You sculpt as well. And just now, we'll see some of the other kinds of ingenuities and entrepreneurship that you're, that you're also involved in. How do you decide, when an idea comes to you, which one [medium] it's going to manifest in?

[48:57]

Ms Sophie Peters: It is... What you say?

[48:59]

Dr Sharlene Khan: When an idea comes to. How do you, how do you decide which one, whether it's going to be a painting or a wood cut or mural, how do you decide?

[49:12]

Ms Sophie Peters: Well, when I was looking at the work and I see that I've got too much work, I will take this painting that I maybe, a drawing and I send it into etching because that will make it more, so strong expressing and make it small and very strong that I will do that because when I'm going to put it in the mural, it'll take me two or three months to get out that powerful points that I want to do. But now what happened, we be in a rush because they want the work as fast as we can. They didn't want to work for three months. So I have to go down to lino or etching and push this thing out for my exhibition. So it was time limited. That was the reason I do that. Ja.

[50:13]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Do you have, is there any favourite medium? Is there something that you are more passionate about between all of this?

[50:22]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja, I'm looking at that linocut, [I Am Lost Inside My Tears, 2000] the heart that lays on the press. The reason the heart is on the press, and there's a tube that goes from the heart, right out. It means from the heart inside, it comes right straight out and it gives the wording to people. It's like it, it goes to the press. Anything that I speak goes to the papers, it goes to, it goes to on TV, some magazines, it goes through there. That's why I use the press on Caversham square, uh, Caversham Press,⁴ to show that everything that's in the heart when it comes out, it brings it powerfully on paper. So that is the reason I use an angel around the press and the heart because we can't live inside – Satan is around and try to manipulate our lives and make us sick and then try to kill us. But God has, gave us angels like Roman, at 3 v13, He said, 'There's angel that guides you from the morning and the night, wherever you go. You are protected by angels and his blood that He shed for me and you.' So that is the reason I put the heart on the press and the angel behind. So that's why through the pandemic, we are still healthy and we can talk without masks because God is most powerful than the sickness, this pandemic. And yeah, I actually didn't care about any mask or something because I never make anyone sick and I'm still healthy and I can just pray for people. And that's how it goes. Without prayer I will never, ever make it with this house full of painting, without the strength of God. I would be really useless. Yeah, that that's.

[52:50]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Sophie, you've spoken about, you know this work about the printing press, and you've spoken about your relationship a little bit with spirituality. And I want, I want you to tell me a little bit about your work with Caversham [Press] because you've done a lot of work with Caversham Press, right? Can you tell me a little bit about your work with Caversham Press and with Malcolm?

[53:15]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ok. This is a work that I did with Malcolm Christian. He is a brilliant guy who taught us a lot. And I

[53:27]

Dr Sharlene Khan: He's like a wizard, right?

⁴ The Caversham Press is the first private collaborative printmaking studio in South Africa and was instrumental in the foundation of a number of print artists in South Africa.

[53:28]

Ms Sophie Peters: (Laughs) And that is the first time that I did silkscreen in colour and lino combined. So when it came out, I was like, wow, I can't believe that I did this! Because every work of mine was black and white. Now the Past, The Past of The Future, that one there [The Times of My Past, 1999] that is just a square of colour. The reason is I made a code to just say this, it was a piece of myself that is a code, a colour code. And because if anyone wants to steal it, you will make maybe some, some other colour you will put down, but that is oil colour is not any colour that you can put. So when they steal it, I will know the pigment of that is my code and that is the greatest piece because it's part of me from my childhood right to adult. All the pieces, elements that you see, it's snakes, it's lizards is all the kind of patterns, those are the stuff, as a child I was playing with. I brought everything from my childhood, from, from pork bones, we ate pork bones and, and porridge every time because it wasn't genuine food, that made us grow. And like they, they call it 'bhajia' in English, but it's morogo Zulu, and that makes us grow, and it gave us more strength in in our blood. It's like, it strengthens your blood. It's like spinach, but all that kind of stuff – The reason why I made I'm 'Lost In My Tears', this is a print that I did, because when I cry, I cry of all the past and the pain, but I brought it through the press and that's why anyone look at my linos, it comes from inside, from the heart straight to the press. And everyone catches it, and it puts a to TV on, on papers and magazines, whatever, it went through the press of the heart. And that's why I call it 'I'm Lost In My Tears' because my tears writes down what I'm feeling inside.

[56:24]

Dr Sharlene Khan: But the print and the print medium also allows you to make multiples, and you started extending that to cushions as well. But you've been a lot more entrepreneurial than that. And you know what we're seeing here now is some of the range of your entrepreneurial spirit because you make purses, you make unique, you make pouches for bags, for, for bible, for books. You make these wonderfully stylish bands, which we are advertising here and we see here to make us look extra gorgeous. But I want to also highlight some of the super practical ways in which you help us as women in our lives as well. And so I want you to, to sort of demonstrate for us the use of what seems to be these very decorative, cute little sticks. But I want you to, to tell us what they're about the set of sticks in this, the set of sticks, what they're called and what their functions are.

[57:35]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ok, I will start with the, with this pouch thing. When people looks at it, when I take this out, they will think is for a phone, but it's not for a phone, it's to carry the sticks. And this, you carrying it to put it over your neck and you go to the shop and you don't need to look for it and because it's just here. And you take it out and you use it, put it over there. And because when the bag is too heavy with like fish tins and millie meal or anything, it's heavy, it cuts your hand. But now it's easy done and you can just carry it and you can walk with it out. So everything when, when you finish at home, you take it out, you put it there and you hang it on the wall and you know that you can go shopping when you take it from the wall. So this is how it is. And this other one, I showed it when you maybe tired of the straight ones and you use the crooked one. There's leather on it. It's soft, it's comfortable. You can just carry it nicely and you can go to town, whatever. Now it's, it's unbreakable, it's uncrackable, it's unbeatable, and it goes nowhere. It helps you carry. So, it's soft so you can just carry a shopping centre whatever. You can carry anything, it beats anything.

[59:26]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And these are made out of blue gum?

[59:28]

Ms Sophie Peters: Yeah, it's made out of blue gum. And this is an other kind of tree that I, I don't know what the name is, but I was, I was really fascinated, fascinated about the kind of skin of it, and I use it. But the reason why I carved it out like this, it's a place for the skin to hold it, not to be like bumpy or lumpy.

[59:57]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Like I mean all sorts of sizes. I mean, shapes and sizes. Simplicity for those people who are super minimalists as well. And your brand is called SAGGT'? What does SAGGT stand for?

[1:00:10]

Ms Sophie Peters: Ja. It's, it's Sophie Art Gallery and General Trade. That is SAGGT.

[1:00:22]

Dr Sharlene Khan: And you know, I can't. I mean, it's amazing because, you know, I remember the days when I did used to take taxis and, you know, carrying home groceries. And literally I would cry, you know. Between my home sometimes and the house just from these, these packets that cutting into the hand. And you know, I have to say with all of my degrees, you know, nothing as simple as this ever crossed my mind. But it's just sheer ingenuity and talent. And really, if you say it, God's gift to put this in your head to make something like this, you know, it's really, you know, your ingenuity. But here is another amazing idea that you have. So, you need to tell us about this amazing idea as well.

[1:01:16]

Ms Sophie Peters: Okay. This, I sat at home and I thought, okay to go and carry wood. If you look at a painting on the wall, there's an angel around the woman that carries wood on her head. [Guiding Angel, 2001] Ja, and you get some women that works on, on the field. They carry wood because in the wood there can be maybe a snake or something like that, and she didn't see it, and it can bite her. But now this I came across, I thought, 'Okay, if we go picnic or something like that and we want to go and fetch wood and not carrying, you can just pack it in here and carry it by hand and you can move around with it. But now I realize that the wood is too thick. I must make it a little bit smaller. That's another idea to shrink it up, and you can hold it nicely. But this here is strong. This is blue gum, it's the same friend or the small ones. So, it's so strong it actually goes nowhere. And you can just tie it up and you can just put it like this and, and pull it up and bring the wood. You tied it up, it won't fall. So that is another idea. So this is the stuff that hits me every time when I wake up in the morning and do, 'Jislik, what I'm going to do today?' Joh, something nice comes up. I go to bathroom and clean myself and eat and start working, get to the new thing. And the painting will wait maybe for a week before, as it goes dry, then I start working with the leather. So this is a kind of person that I am. I dream my stuff out and I start working. I don't need to go to a factory, so I design it all.

[1:03:24]

Dr Sharlene Khan: So tell me, who are some of your own like artistic influences, or people who have influenced you?

[1:03:32]

Ms Sophie Peters: Of this kind of stuff?

[1:03:33]

Dr Sharlene Khan: No, everything. Everything.

[1:03:38]

Ms Sophie Peters: Just by the paintings, it was really Willie Bester. You know, the way he worked with tins, it was mind boggling. I don't know how that guy started that thing. But the only thing is when we work as artists, it's like we, we try to compete with each other, but not actually, but inside, you want to show what you can give. The same when you dresses, I think, 'Oh, I could design this thing like this.' This is beautiful, but it goes beyond, you know. And ideas, it's like a dream. It's like it's a given idea. Yeah. And it's inside here. You want to design something, but you don't know what's in my, my mind. And tomorrow when I put my table out you, 'Haa.. Yhu.. How?' Neh, I just did it. I don't know how, how happened. Same with purses. I know how purses been done. But suddenly when I go Woodex, I look at in the, in the bin, I see a lot of pieces of leather. I thought, 'Okay, it's so soft' and in my mind came: You can design purses, uncut purses. So I called it 'Uncut'. The purse that she got, it's a usual, usual, it's a usual purse that you can get on the streets. But the skin you can't get it on the street. It's expensive. Zebra you can't get it anywhere. You can just get it by the thrift shops. Very expensive. You can pay maybe R300.00 or R200.00 for the just the skin, never mind the design of the purse. Yeah. So that is the ideas that came up. The armbands skin you can't throw it away because everything is around. It got it's, got its place and it got its purpose for being around. You can't just do nothing. You can't throw anything away. Everything is money.

[1:06:04]

Dr Sharlene Khan And what are these called? And what are these called?

[1:06:07]

Ms Sophie Peters: I sometimes I call them 'My Ladies', you know. 'My Ladies', small ones, because they're lady wise, you know. You just handle it. And when I started, I called these 'Comfies', all right. But the reason why I call them 'Comfies' because my name is on them and it just, I don't know to call. It's too much too soon. This is a wood

carrier. It haven't got a unique name, so wood carrier. That's all. It saves the person that works in the field and when you go out for a picnic or something like that, that's your carrier, wood carrier, that's the name. It's not a funny name. Yeah. So this is all.

[1:07:07]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Has there been things about your work that has been written about your work that you have not liked.

[1:07:17]

Ms Sophie Peters: Er... No. Because whatever comes out of my hands, it comes from my soul. And when it goes out, it gets sold. But sometimes my fault is I hold some work back for a number of years. I don't know why it happens, but it's just like that. And when a certain number of years comes and suddenly you're a person say, "I want that work. How much is it?" Then I sell it because it's it is time to go out. Then I release it from my heart and forget about it.

[1:07:57]

Dr Sharlene Khan: In terms of the way the South African field engages with your work, is there sometimes the way that the arts field writes or engages with your work is there sometimes, you are not happy?

[1:08:13]

Ms Sophie Peters: I can say when we get stuck with, with no, with no money or something like that and the work is around, but you don't want to release it, but you need to let it go and you really to design something new. And to say, I don't like what I did now, if that something happens, it happens in the studio. I paint over that. Let me tell you, see this painting of my mother [Her Days Were Numbered, 2005]? There's two paintings under it.

[1:08:52]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Oh, no!

[1:08:54]

Ms Sophie Peters: [laughs] There's two paintings. And yeah, you're right. I did a strong hand in green because I was angry, you see. I put that the green hand out of that. It

wasn't by the side, it was out of the stomach. I put it out of the stomach and the guy of the gallery said, "Eish! It's too painful, man." And he went out and Conrad Theuys, I think he's still alive now is old now. He said, "If you can take what happens in the studio, get out, don't come in. Leave the artist because art is expressing the pain that happens in the family." And the colleague went out and Conrad Theuys looked at the painting and he study it and he felt that that a painting, this painting was under tears. I was drawing it in a room where nobody comes in. I cried and I paint, you know, it was it, joh, it was too much pain. And when that painting finish up, I came down and the pain was out. 2005, I sold a half of the whole paintings in the gallery, the opening of the show. So that was a blessing because it came out truthful, with no lies. Even the sculptures were sold, the books, *Mafia and the Aeroplane* (1994), I was there like an autograph. I have to sign autograph. The books were just flying.

[1:10:32]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Mm. You've done, you've done a lot of book illustrations, right?

[1:10:35]

Ms Sophie Peters: That's right. So that is who I am. I take it, I talk it like it is. I don't pull no punches. Yeah. That is yeah, that is what it is. I don't tell lies.

[1:10:53]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: So Sophie we spoke earlier on about your work and the violences, the femicide, you know, and a lot of your other work also deals with various social issues. You see a lot of poverty reflected. We see issues with HIV/Aids. I was wondering if you could talk more about that.

[1:11:15]

Ms Sophie Peters: When I talk about HIV, there's too much distrust between a woman and a man. Sometimes they talk about love, but then it's not really love, love you, but they love what they can get out of you. Maybe is in a sex life just to satisfy the desire. And when they finish there and they just, how can I say, rise up and just hit the road and they don't care about you. And that is not love, is love for a desire for sex. But when it comes protecting themselves, there is no such a thing like protecting in that same time and government realize that they must make some condoms to save people, not to get the disease. But in raping there's no time now for condom and something like that. They

hit you and they push you up or something like that. And they rape you and they finish and they go. And when you're still alive and they sitting with the disease that this guy go and rape all this kind of other woman and bring it to you. And that's why the reason it's in lots of communities, you get Aids. When you get on TV, they will tell you, we come with you four hundred thousand for AIDS, whatever, we will make sure that you can live longer, but you know not to sleep around and to catch this kind of disease because you can't read it on the face of the woman or a man. You can't smell it. You can't see that person got Aids. It's a disease that got no colour or sign. So that happens in this kind of life. That's why I did it with the rope over the hand. It's between white and black. It doesn't, Aids and diseases doesn't cut no colour. It doesn't ask what colour can it take or what kind of nation can it take. It takes everyone in one time. So that's why between lands and communities and cities or wherever, it hits everyone. Everyone get to the hospital and sit with pills for the rest of their lives and things like that. So that's why I spoke about Aids. But I'm calling it 'Cry Mercy' (2005), because when you know that if this pill doesn't help me, my children are still young, I have to cry to God for mercy, for me to live longer, to look after my children and my family. So that's why the name is 'Cry Mercy'. Now, when I get to this painting, [Drinking Energy, 2006] I spoke earlier about women that really works for their children when they know they got one or two or three children. These children must go to colleges. This children, they are musicians. This children are artists. The children's are lawyers and maybe they're going to fly airplanes or something. Their futures is in their hands. But the one who keep the future alive is the mother because the child is a future. Because when the child grows there, either when he lands in good, how can I, in good soil, let me say, and in good hands, then that child will produce a good life and he will live and learn more to go and study or something and to be something, someone better. But when he falls in the hands of a wrong community? He will lands in drugs. He will lands in gangsterism. He will lands in gunnism. You know where he started fighting and putting grudges out, something like that. Wrong friends. But when the lady of the house or the mother looks properly after children and get the money that she can deliver or wors, how can I say, the sausages and everything. Pig skin and you know, meat, they sell it on streets just to get money to feed their children and get them to colleges. And they work very hard. Now I call it 'Drinking Energy'. How is it possible that this lady wake up in the morning? Early in the morning, she sits outside and she sells fat cakes and eggs and whatever and she, her goal is: My child must get on top. That is what she's giving that morning. But now, when she gets abused and whatever, she won't show the people that she gets abused at

home and she's sitting and selling this kind of food for her children or her husband say 'You must bring some money in here. I don't want to hear anything. You do bring nothing in a I will, I will smack you or bang you out.' So that is a kind of abuse, life is some stuff that happens. So that's why I call it a 'Drinking Energy'.

[1:17:34]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Sophie, you talk about, you talk about men's desire. You talk about about men's love. But spirituality, you know, God has been very, very close to ideas of what God and your spirituality has been a very big part of your life. Can you tell us what spirituality is for you?

[1:17:52]

Ms Sophie Peters: Okay. Some women and men knows how to go to church because they get it from their mom or their father, when the father prays a lot or something like that. And they will work around it because God gives the power for us to wake up in the morning. To live. And if God doesn't protect you and your sin is that high, He takes His hand away because you're a mess up in the community, you mess up in town, you're a mess up in the country or something like that. But when they start praying and knows who God is, then the children will know how to pray, and they will know to respect someone else. They will know that my mother said respect someone else because God love you and go die for you, you see. John 3v16, it say "For God so loved the world gave His only, only begotten son." But me and women out there won't give their only son. For someone else said, 'Take my son and let him go to work for you.' No, they will work and hold each other in the end. But God, God realizes that to save the whole world – children, babies, old ladies and dit maak nie saak nie (it doesn't matter) – but He gave His son to save us from sin, and His only blood wash our sins away. But if your permission, if you give a permission that the blood of Christ wash your sins away, then the blood will do that because God allows them. But if you doesn't, it won't do that. The Bible say God stands by the door and knocks. If you opens the door, then He will enter. But if you doesn't, He says, gentlemen, you stand outside because your world will allow him to do what He wants to do in your life. But if your world doesn't work that way, He can't do. He won't do that. So that's why children, sorry, that's why the children, they growing up and they focus on their future. That's why I did, I made that young boy that it's focussing straight, that when my mother goes down, I'm around, I can still make it up.

[1:20:44]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: And we see that a lot work, conversations of, you know, being saved healing and as much as the work does reflect a lot of communal trauma and personal trauma, it also speaks a lot about communal healing and spiritual healing and personal healing as well. And I was just wondering, you know, with everything that's happened in your life and you speaking about how you've healed, what does that feel like? Like, do you finally feel free? Do you feel lighter? What does healing feel like?

[1:21:20]

Ms Sophie Peters: It's exciting, really. I'm free. I'm feeling strong. I'm feeling young, not old. I'm feeling I can make another 50 years.

[1:21:34]

Dr Sharlene Khan: You're feeling hungry because this interview I long.

[1:21:37]

Ms Sophie Peters: Yoh... I'm feeling hungry to work further. I feel hungry to design more. I feel to write more songs and get the music out. And whether you cry in the taxi goes past and you hear that music, you will forget about crying, you will try to listen to that song. That is what it's in me. I'm like a tree that gives you life to other people or other trees or something like that. But I'm a part of a tree that God created. I'm not a destroying tree, you know. I give life and I make sure you live with peace. That is within me. I'm not aggressive person. I love people because I'm a human, full person, why must I reject and grudge and hate you? You the same like me. So there's no other. It's like it is. We got to love each other like I love myself, right? So, OK, so that's it. It's done.

[1:22:51]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Okay, the last question.

[1:22:52]

Ms Nono Motlhoki: The last question I think is a personal question for me, as a young artist. Uhm, firstly, I was wondering how it's like working on, you know, in Mannenberg and in Kensington. And I'm particularly wondering because sometimes I'm afraid to leave Jo'burg, you know, because it's an epicenter of the arts and everything, and it has

the youth and the creativities. I feel like if I leave Jo'burg, then I become invisible. You know, so I wonder what it's like to practice on this side of the art world and also how you like how you feel now at the age of 52, your position is in the arts, whether it's the local arts here in Kensington or it's within the whole of South Africa or internationally. How do you feel about where you are now as an artist?

[1:23:52]

Ms Sophie Peters: I feel excited, jislik. Like I don't involve in people's fighting on the streets. When I hear gunshots, but I don't go peep because I see it on TV. I got no problem. They can finish what they finish outside. I don't involve in any scandalising of people or sitting and chit chatting about you the whole day and, and think I'm the king and I'm better than everyone. That made me safe in Mannenberg. It keeps me in the house because the painting doesn't say, run out and go look what's happening, but my heart is in what I want to say. So in Cape Town, it makes me walk free because "Good morning, hi, hello. Hoe gaan dit? Nee, dit gaan goed. Neh, its oryt. Fine. Hoe gaan dit my broer? Neh, is oryt". Everyone is happy. Whether he's so aggressive, I break him down. "Hello my broer. Hoe gaan dit? Hierso weer sien. Die son skyn, alles is lekker, jy XXX gesond, XXX is kwaad by die huis. As jy kwaad gemaak by die huis, maak 'n ander draai man en vergeet daar, jy, jy kan dit maak vir die dag". Verstaan jy nou? Now this is how I am. I met a gangster two weeks ago. Hy se, ja "ek, ek, is n Hardlivings". "Oh, goed, jy se a Hardlivings my broer, die lieue is baie swaar, ek dink jy moet werk gaan soek, want jy kry baie swaar maar die se twee hande and they kan mos werk, and a Hardlivings kan mos genoeg geld and kan jy sorg vir jouself". So that is how you can talk to aggressive gangsters, you speak natural and when you greet him nice, he will greet you nicely. And when you talk to him, he goes humble. He won't pull out a gun it's like he's hunted, no. If you treat him like you wanted to be treated, he will treat you the same way. But if he greets you and you go bubbly and "Ya! Don't greet me!" they will go, they will ask: What's wrong with you? Then the fight start and they will poke you, or they will shoot you, you see. But me, even in a car, I will greet people. Hallo. If he doesn't greet, you just got it and I pass with my car. I greet everyone. Even the guy that you saw on the street, that's greasy, whatever. Hallo, he goes, okay, dan gaan hy verby. Even I give him a R2.00. I don't know what he's going to do with a R2.00 but he gets it. So, love anyone. Even this waste material that walks on the street, you can create him a little bit better. But just give him a piece of your love, is not a lot. Just "Hello. Hi, how are you? Fine. Ok." Then he will go – Even a drunkard, you go like this, he goes like this.

You understand. So engage with everyone, that made me live so long. Even in church when I see someone struggles, I won't talk on that moment. Let's talk a little bit, silently. And just to hold a person on the shoulder or on the neck, he breaks down because the thing inside hurts him. But he finds out that someone loves me and takes care of me and can listen to the piece or story that hurts me. And then it goes away. And next time when he sees me in church, 'Hello', and they will try to talk to you again and say, 'That piece help me what you gave me' You understand. Pieces of words means a lot to someone else. Even when a person cries, just take a hankie and wipe it and give her a huggie and say, "Everything will be okay. It will be alright." Things like that. So that creates a beautiful world. Without that, man, you lost. It's not going to work. The beauty must be inside out. That's, that's what I know. If you so ugly, but what you do counts a lot. Buy a magazine. You see a beautiful colour but you get there ah... You understand. And you see maybe different picture that doesn't fit you. That's not good. But you got to be like a magazine that hungry outside, hungry inside. Must make her happy from inside. So it will makes you happy from inside out. I'm happy for you ask me all this question.

[1:29:34]

Dr Sharlene Khan: (laughs) Well, we've come to the, almost to the end of our interview. I'm going to ask you one last set of questions, now. You have to answer very, very quickly, and you're going to answer in one word. Not thinking too much. Only one word, Sophie. Ya, only one. But I know you're thinking already. I know. No long stories, nothing. Just one word, neh. All right. So now we're gonna ask you the Art On Our Mind questionnaire. Ok, ready? All right. What makes you happy, instantly?

[1:30:18]

Ms Sophie Peters: When I see people. And I ...

[1:30:23]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Yep, that's it! What makes you unhappy, instantly?

[1:30:26]

Ms Sophie Peters: When people are broken.

[1:30:29]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Okay. What's your least favourite colour?

[1:30:32]

Ms Sophie Peters: Purple.

[1:30:34]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Do you have a favourite book or writer?

[1:30:37]

Ms Sophie Peters: Mafia and the Airplane.

[1:30:40]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Okay, who is your favourite artist?

[1:30:43]

Ms Sophie Peters: Willie Bester.

[1:30:45]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Who is your favourite heroine? Woman hero.

[1:30:53]

Ms Sophie Peters: It was my mother.

[1:30:56]

Dr Sharlene Khan: If you could wish any artwork that you could have from any time period, and you could have it within your house ...

[1:31:04]

Ms Sophie Peters: Cecil Skotnes.

[1:31:06]

Dr Sharlene Khan: (laughs) Which artist, artwork or art movement do you dislike the most?

[1:31:15]

Ms Sophie Peters: Dislike?

[1:31:15]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Yeah, dislike. (laughs)

[1:31:18]

Ms Sophie Peters: I don't.

[1:31:21]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Okay, what kind of songs get you going?

[1:31:24]

Ms Sophie Peters: Jazz.

[1:31:26]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What is your favourite word?

[1:31:28]

Ms Sophie Peters: Love.

[1:31:30]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What is your least favourite word?

[1:31:33]

Ms Sophie Peters: Love.

[1:31:33]

Dr Sharlene Khan: No, least favourite. The one that you dislike the most.

[1:31:38]

Ms Sophie Peters: Hate.

[1:31:41]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What turns you on?

[1:31:45]

Ms Sophie Peters: Joy.

[1:31:46]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What turns you off?

[1:31:50]

Ms Sophie Peters: Loveless.

[1:31:50]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Okay. What makes you laugh?

[1:31:55]

Ms Sophie Peters: Love. That makes me laugh? It's love. The joy that's in people.

[1:32:02]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What's your best virtue? Your best quality. What's your best quality?

[1:32:08]

Ms Sophie Peters: Clothing.

[1:32:08]

Dr Sharlene Khan: It's your best quality? Ah, clothing, okay. What's your idea of misery?

[1:32:18]

Ms Sophie Peters: Misery?

[1:32:18]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Mm. What can make you miserable?

[1:32:11]

Ms Sophie Peters: When people doesn't give love to other people.

[1:32:25]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What sound or noise do you love the most?

[1:32:29]

Ms Sophie Peters: Guns.

[1:32:30]

Dr Sharlene Khan: (laughs) You love that? What? That you love, what sound or noise do you love?

[1:32:36]

Ms Sophie Peters: Oh, okay. Sorry. (laughter) Music.

[1:32:54]

Dr Sharlene Khan: What sound or noise do you hate? Guns. (laughter) What is your favourite swear word?

[1:33:04]

Ms Sophie Peters: Uh-uh, No. I don't swear.

[1:33:09]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Not even 'Gosh'?

[1:33:10]

Ms Sophie Peters: Uh-uh. I don't think 'Gosh' is a swear word.

[1:33:14]

Dr Sharlene Khan: I think so, maybe in some places.

[1:33:17]

Ms Sophie Peters: Well, I don't know. Gosh, no, it's fine.

[1:33:21]

Dr Sharlene Khan: 'Damn'?

[1:33:22]

Ms Sophie Peters: Nuh-uh

[1:33:22]

Dr Sharlene Khan: No? Too harsh, too harsh. What profession, what job either than your own would you have like to have tried?

[1:33:29]

Ms Sophie Peters: Uhm, to work in an office. Computers and stuff.

[1:33:33]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Mhm... Okay, you're a computer/tech person. Okay. What profession or what job would you have least liked to have done?

[1:33:44]

Ms Sophie Peters: Uhm, like wood carving, to create some stuff out of wood.

[1:33:47]

Dr Sharlene Khan: No, that you would have not liked to have done.

[1:33:50]

Ms Sophie Peters: Oh, oh, oh.

[1:33:52]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Would you have been a torture to you.

[1:33:58]

Ms Sophie Peters: To sit in the streets, ja. The whole day. Ja, and gossip. I would never like to do that. It's not a job.

[1:34:10]

Dr Sharlene Khan: How would you like to die?

[1:34:12]

Ms Sophie Peters: Peacefully and lovely, ja.

[1:34:18]

Dr Sharlene Khan: When you die, and you go to heaven, what would you like to hear god say when you enter those pearly gates?

[1:34:12]

Ms Sophie Peters: Enter, my good servant and warrior. That's all.

[1:34:35]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Well, Sophie, on behalf of the Art on our Mind...

[1:34:39 – 1:35:01] [casual banter]

[1:35:01]

Dr Sharlene Khan: Sophie, on behalf of the Art on our Mind research team we want to extend our huge thanks for giving us your time so generously and for just delighting us and thank you for being a wonderful tree of life for everyone. Thank you. And as always, we'd like to extend our thanks to Mia Louw for her great videography, and to Fouad Asfour as well for the research, for the scanning, for all kinds of invisible labour that he does for the Art on our Mind research team and for the website as well. And thanks to all of you for watching this and for being with us on these journeys. Thank you.